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Farm Bill Forum Statement

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Ag Progress Days, Rock Springs, PA

Good morning. My name is Jessica Dreistadt. I am the Coordinator of Advocacy and Outreach at Second Harvest Food Bank of Lehigh Valley and Northeast Pennsylvania, located in Allentown. We are a program of the Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley. Second Harvest Food Bank provides food to over 50,000 needy people each month through a network of 180 nonprofit organizations throughout six counties in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

In our service area, 60,383 individuals participate in the Food Stamp Program. This number has increased 81% in the past five years. Food stamps, our nation's first line of defense against hunger, must be sustained and strengthened in the 2007 Farm Bill. The structure of the Food Stamp Program must remain intact so that we can continue to respond to increased need, as we have in the Lehigh Valley.

This Farm Bill is an opportunity to increase monthly allotments and minimum benefits for food stamp participants, increase access to food stamps through simplified applications and extended outreach, and expand eligibility for the program. *Proper nutrition leads to reduced healthcare costs, improved learning capacity for children, and increased productivity for adults.* We can strengthen family stability and enhance individuals' quality of life by safeguarding federal nutrition programs, such as food stamps, that help people maintain their dignity and vitality during difficult economic times.

Please protect our most vulnerable citizens, including children and the elderly, by strengthening the Food Stamp Program in the 2007 Farm Bill. On behalf of the 36.2 million Americans who live in households that can't afford to purchase adequate food, thank you for your consideration.



*A Program of the Community Action Committee
of the Lehigh Valley, Inc.*

